

**Unison response to 2023 budget proposals**

Newport City Council have found themselves in a tremendously difficult position with the current financial crisis. We recognise that this is not of their creation, but it has led to budget proposals that make for very difficult reading.

The necessity to create a legal balanced budget has led to proposals that impact on some of the most vulnerable within our community's.

The reality is that after many years of austerity cuts from Westminster there are few choices that will not impact on the communities and the staff of Newport City Council.

We ask that the council carefully consider the options available to them and fully consider the impacts of those decisions. We appreciate that none of the councillors elected did so with an agenda of closing services.

We have of course offered individual feedback on a variety of the budget proposals and will not repeat those points here, but we would like to suggest that some of the cuts proposed will not meet the savings that have been suggested.

Running services differently will bring with it additional costs which will offer less value for money. Room hires, increased mileage costs, loss of working time due to staff working across several sites in a day, loss of experienced staff with expertise in their areas. Increased sickness caused by increased volume of work and increased stress.

The loss of short-term support and intervention at the earliest opportunities within family's that need additional support to avoid future long-term intervention that will require multi agency high level support at greater costs.

Increased pressures placed on remaining social services and the NHS due to support having to be removed only moves the problem. Robbing Peter to pay Paul just moves the problem further down the road.

Anti-social behaviour and noise pollution increases will potentially increase increasing demand on other services within the council and other external agencies also potentially impact on Newport City's reputation.

We would be remiss in our duties if we didn't point out that the majority of cuts to services appear to be at the front line of services with no great impact on senior management. We believe that if everything is currently being considered with nothing off the table then consideration must be given to senior structures and the numbers of heads of service currently in place.

Unison Newport City Branch cannot and will not support any budget that contains compulsory redundancies or that puts further pressure on staff that are already working above capacity on a regular basis.

Peter Garland  
Branch Secretary  
UNISON Newport City Branch

**Unison response to budget proposals for Oaklands Respite service**

Having attended the 1:1 meetings for the staff members at Oaklands with the line manager and HR I have witnessed the strength of feeling from the staff team at the sweeping proposals.

The intention to change the service delivery from a 5-day service to a 3-day service and reducing the staff to 12 from its current level is quite a short-sighted money saving exercise.

I understand the need to make savings in the overall NCC budget but the stress and difficulties the service users and their families are going to be subjected to is difficult to understand. The service that is currently provided gives a vital break not only for the service users but also gives an opportunity for the families to have a much-needed rest period to refill their energy levels and provide time to give other siblings and family members some quality time.

The changes will not only affect the staff who provide a top-quality service but the financial and emotional wellbeing of the parents and carers who trust and rely on the current service. The removal of service provision to 50% of the service users is going to leave 50% of service users and their families having to source, if possible, an exterior service provider which will be at a greater cost and not necessarily the quality of professionalism they currently receive from the highly trained and motivated NCC staff team.

While we are glad the service is not being axed altogether and the hope is that in the future the service will be expanded once more. The loss of highly qualified staff, during an extremely difficult time for recruiting staff into the care sector does not bode well for anyone thinking of joining the wider care profession.

The reduction in service provision will also impact on other support services who will need to be called upon to assist the families of the displaced service users. This will surely mean that their own services will be stretched coping with the expanded needs of families and their children. This is assuming those services are not affected by reductions in their own budgets as many services are being asked to make substantial savings themselves.

It has not gone unnoticed that NCC now has 11 Heads of Service, many not having been in place for long, who it appears are not going to be affected by the budget cuts.

Whereas staff who have served within NCC for many years are being told they cannot be sustained in their positions. Also, families being told their service is not affordable at this time.

It appears the lowest paid are being affected whilst the management structure remains largely unaffected.

We as a Union would not support forced redundancies within the workforce and will do our utmost for the benefit of our members and in their best interests.

John Lane  
Assistant Branch Secretary  
UNISON Newport City Branch

## **APPENDIX 4b - Specific responses to consultation**

### **Unison Budget response to library's proposal**

The impact on Library's may seem to be less damaging than impacts on other staff groups within the proposals.

The repurposing of the site in Pill to classrooms will impact on the local community who use the library as a local hub. From talking with the staff based within pill she has explained that many of the local community use the computers for various reasons including job applications, benefit claims etc.

Whilst these facilities are available in other areas across the city some of the local population tend not to travel outside of Pill and the local library and staff are a constant that they rely on.

The library currently links in with the other local community support projects and the repurposing of the site will remove that link from a community that is currently one of the poorest within Newport.

Peter Garland  
Branch Secretary UNISON Newport City Branch.

### **Unison Budget Response to Barnardo's/Baby and me team**

This team has had amazing results since being set up and the report on the teams results which the council celebrated earlier in the year supports this. The team are passionate and committed to the people they support.

The removal of the posts suggested will change the very nature of the team and the specialised help they can offer. They have helped families to bond and grow ensuring that children have the safe and supportive environment they need, and parents feel supported and able meet the challenges of being a new parent.

Whilst understanding the councils need to make savings, we ask that they look closely at the level of success of this team and consider not only the positive impact this team have had on a personal level for those they have supported but how much future interventions have been avoided.

By being involved so early in the family framework and supporting when first needed it must be considered how much future support will not be needed avoiding the use of valuable resources in the future. Not only financial resources but the amount of staffing hours needed in the future. We ask the council to think about the long-term impact of not having this team in place while considering the current financial crisis. Council must decide if the short-term savings outweigh the gains that could be made by this team continuing in the successful format that is currently operating so successfully.

This is again a budget proposal that has been put forward because this area has so many statutory services within it that limits the options around where savings can be made.

Peter Garland  
Branch Secretary  
UNISON Newport City Branch

**Unison Response to budget proposal relating to Community Safety Wardens 2023**

The proposal suggests that the current service be cut to four community safety wardens and 1 supervisor.

We struggle to see how the service would have a stable enough structure with enough staff to be able to operate the service. If the supervisor becomes the back up for staff cover for sickness or annual leave the question is how they manage their workload if they are covering patrols as well. If the staff are at the lowest levels of annual leave that's 16 weeks a year that patrols could not take place without a supervisor having to step away from their tasks to support if patrols were to continue and that does not include any sickness cover.

The two potential rotas that have been suggested for the service moving forward suggest either staff working every Saturday of the year or having one Saturday off in three. The rota would consist of a five-day week Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday. The second rota suggestion from staff offered them a Saturday off while working a Tuesday instead once every 3 weeks. (this was a staff proposal that has been turned down).

When the initial proposal was put forward it was suggested working days would be selected via statistics but both the CSW's and supervisors believe Mondays are actually very busy and removing them as a working day is just another cut to their wages as they would no longer be paid bank holiday rates. A saving for the council again paid for directly from the pockets of staff. This also means any complaints from a Saturday night will not be acknowledged or responded to till a Tuesday late afternoon.

There is not a service across the council where staff are asked to work every Saturday in a year or have to use annual leave to achieve a full weekend off from work. Work/life balance is important for mental well being and to allow for good family harmonics.

There is a suggestion that the CSW wardens will change how they will work if this budget proposal goes through. This does not seem to have been explored with any great thought with suggestions such as working only in specific targeted areas whilst continuing to cover the range of tasks previously managed.

The CSW's feel that they offer an important service to NCC which is not recognised due to using hire vehicles with no identifying marks this they feel limits their visibility within the community. If they were using NCC vehicles there would be a saving of the vehicle hire costs and they would be more visible to the communities of Newport.

Currently the staff deal with all of the noise complaints within Newport so staff are questioning if they would have the ability to maintain this task and if not, who would deal with those cases. Police no longer respond to noise complaints and environmental health do not have the ability to respond to calls outside of business hours. This argument can also be made for the many other tasks that the team deal with.

Both of the long serving supervisors have opted for redundancy as neither feels that the alternative proposal will work and the service, they have supported for many years is being set up to fail and will become a victim of further cuts next year.

Whilst their service is being cut there is further investment within CCTV, and they question why the weight of these cuts are not being shared across other areas.

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We have attempted to find out how many FPN's have actually be paid after being issued by the team, but we don't have the information at time of this response being written. Savings suggestions from staff are outlined below.

Delete the two supervisor roles make one/two senior CSW's more senior duties passed onto manager.

Use NCC electric vehicles instead of the hire vehicles currently being used. Savings on fuel and hire costs

Ensure that all fixed penalty notices are paid those not paid are challenged robustly.

The staff feel under valued and uncared for with the latest proposal suggesting that they can work a shift pattern that will be detrimental to themselves while life above supervisor level goes on without any impact. They feel the proposal is unfair impacting on staff at the front line and the members of public who will have to turn to the police for support or to suffer in silence as they are impacted on by anti-social behaviour and those suffering noise complaint issues are drowned out by the silence of no one being available when it is needed.

This proposal is unrealistic and unsustainable. Staff would rather see the service shut down than to work in a token role that cannot meet the needs of the service.

**Unison Response to Budget proposal for Cwtch Team 2023**

The proposal around the Cwtch team includes shutting the building that currently houses the team. This building is what allows the team to do the job that they do as well as they do and as safely as they do.

Each room is set for a specific age group and there is huge supply of equipment and toys for families to use at the centre.

The rooms are equipped with an alarm system and additional support from the other colleagues within the building to support with escalations of aggression. To help when emotions are raised at the end of a session and children and parents have to leave each other.

When speaking with the staff all of them have highlighted how being able to work in a safe environment allows them to do their job to their best of their ability's.

The alternative proposal suggests that the work of this team can continue if the building and the majority of staff are removed from the structure. We challenge this proposal on a number of points.

- Consistency of meetings families currently have a structured arrangement knowing where and when meetings will occur this will not be possible if the proposal goes ahead. There are not enough private or council rooms that can be booked with any degree of guarantee around suitability or sustainability. This will impact on the family's the quality of meetings and the final results around reuniting children with their families.
- There is a suggestion that contact meetings can be carried out in the family homes. These are the very homes children have been removed from and will be confusing for them and a risk for the staff supporting them.
- For every room that has to be booked outside of the council there will be a cost implication which will impact on any savings made. Considering the cost-of-living crisis this will only increase.
- During the session's disclosures are made. The staff have to record this critical information word for word. The Cwtch site allows this to happen accurately and confidentially. The environment can help these disclosures happen due to individuals feeling safe.
- Whilst this is not a statutory service it is quite frankly run as such it operates 52 weeks a year. Annual leave is granted only as long as the service can support the volume of work. There is a constant struggle for the service to manage the expectations of the courts and cutting this service and how these meetings are managed will impact negatively on NCC's reputation.
- The Cwtch building is also used by other areas within social services so there will be significant impact on those areas if the building is mothballed which doesn't seem to have been considered anywhere within the proposal.

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- For every family that are unable to access the service there is a potential they will need greater intervention in the future which means a bigger impact on services and cost implications.
- The branches greatest concern rests around the safety of staff trying to fulfil this role in the public environment. Due to the nature and sensitivity of these meetings it will only be a matter of time before there is an escalation in a public space. Without control of the environment that the meeting is taking place in the risk cannot be managed. This is a risk that is foreseeable and cannot be minimised to a reasonable level.

Unison Newport City branch will fully support any member that raises concerns around health and safety within their workplace and we will robustly challenge any actions that lead to a detrimental impact on our members physical and mental health wellbeing.

This proposal was put forward by the head of service because of the current financial crisis. We ask the council to look at the long term impact this decision will have on families in crisis. We ask them to consider what cutting the service means in the long term to Newport community's, the over stretched services that will have to fill the hole left by the Cwtch team and the building. The service that is left will be greatly diminished and cannot achieve anywhere near the results or manage volume of work that will be left behind safely for users or staff.

We have not gone into the specific costs or saving suggestions as we have worked with staff and have seen their responses which include this information.

The staff know the importance the building has in allowing them to properly support their family's please listen to them.

Peter Garland  
Branch Secretary  
UNISON Newport City Branch

**Unison Budget response outreach service 2023**

The outreach service is a relatively new service that was created from the closure of the Brynglas day centre.

Its purpose is to support those at most risk within the community offering the opportunity for a member of staff to sit with the client offering their carer a break for a few hours and the client someone different to interact with. There is also an option for them to use the day centre facilities at spring gardens which offers a warm safe environment and a group of peers to interact with.

There are currently sixty-one families using the service with more families on the waiting list for the service and probably more waiting as intake was stopped when the proposal went into consultation. Due to the nature of the service, they face a few more logistical challenges around having their voices heard the service have worked hard to support them to be able to do so. This again shows the level and commitment of this staff group and service to their service users.

There is a wealth of caring skills and experience wrapped up in the service with some staff having over thirty years' experience.

The majority of the staff affected have gone through similar processes on a number of occasions some of the staff have come from Kensington court and some from Brynglas day centre, so this process has been particularly hard on them.

The impact of closure of the service would mean carers don't get respite which can impact on their well being both physically and mentally, if those care givers can no longer look after their loved one's services will have to step in and support, there may be hospital admissions and delays in discharges due to not being able to send them home. All of this involves cost most of which will be picked up by other council services already at full stretch.

Peter Garland  
Branch Secretary  
**UNISON Newport City Branch**





Our ref: RH/JKP  
11 January 2023

Kevin Howells  
Senior HR and OD Business Partner  
NCC

Dear Mr Howells

**Re: GMB Comments re Consultation - Barnardo's Partnership Restructure Proposal**

GMB is very concerned about the impact the proposed cuts to the existing Barnardo's partnership structure will have upon both staffing levels and communities who access this service with specific reference to young people/children.

The Placement Support (3 posts) and Baby And Me Team (1 post) is an intricate part of the overall Barnardo's partnership structure, therefore, to remove it will significantly reduce the effectiveness of the service. GMB has been given examples of how the intervention of the family support has protected young people/children from abuse within the home environment. It is believed that without this intervention, the child/young person could have remained within this abusive relationship.

The children/young people living under SGO's, Fostering and adoption are more on the edge of care with the likelihood of coming fully in the care system than children living at home with birth parents as there is still the option of looking for extended family and friends for them, where those options have already been explored for the others.

The placement support was implemented due to the amount of placement break downs and children/young people being moved to multiple placements in very short time - which as we know is not good for their emotional well-being.

The money that will be saved has not been compared with the amount of money that is being saved from other service areas by this very specialised/ specific intervention.

The GMB would therefore request the Council to identify the amount of savings this service has contributed to other sections of Barnardo's partnership and other wider social care services across the Council.

GMB is therefore, requesting the Council reconsider axing the Family Support Service within the Barnardo's Partnership function.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Hayward  
Senior Organiser



## **Oaklands Respite Service – a proactive alternative to the proposed financial cuts for both NCC and the children.**

*Evidence and proposals to support more ( not less) investment regarding Oaklands Respite Service – and which show the proposed cuts are not financially or morally viable .*

In December 2022, Newport City Council proposed a number of cuts across the city to address a deficit within their 23/24 budget. These proposals target disability services offered and place significant pressure on this particular group of people, including children and their families. Through cuts made to Oaklands respite service the council aims to contribute to the deficit fund by £485,000. This paper shares the ways that NCC has communicated misleading information about the proposal and the impact this will have on children and families. It highlights the way that NCC could have used public money in a more positive and creative way and that this too has come at a human cost to children with disabilities. It is proposed that the savings made by these cuts to the service will be negated by the financial implications. The staff at Oaklands have identified the ways in which the service currently saves money for the Council and that these savings would cease in the event that the proposal is put into action. Additionally, Oaklands staff have identified further cost savings and opportunities to generate income for the council.

It is believed that NCC's proposal is short-sighted, contributing to the systems that function against 'enabling people to live better lives'.

### ***Additional comments and financial information in support of Oaklands Respite Care and opposing the proposed budgetary cuts 15 February 2023***

*"Please see the enclosed comments and financial proposals to accompany previously submitted information from GMB.*

*This report is being formally submitted by GMB on behalf of the dedicated staff at Oaklands Respite Care and is submitted as part of the formal consultation process "*

***For disabled children who access Oaklands as a residential placement,  
NCC proposes removing the solution and creating a crisis.***

***For disabled children who access Oaklands as a respite provision,  
NCC could create the crisis and remove the solution.***

### **Misleading Information and clarification**

The proposal aims to save £485,000.00 by reducing the respite service offering. NCC has communicated these cuts in a manner that is misleading and fails to fully recognise the impact this will have on children and families. Below is a table of the dangerous discourse around this proposal highlighting the deliberate deception made by NCC in their public communications. Therefore the misinformation is addressed and the key facts are provided in the table below and which provides clarity.

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NCC Proposal	Oaklands Response
<i>'Oaklands provide planned short respite breaks...'</i>	Oaklands provides both planned short respite breaks and temporary residential placements for children with disabilities
<i>'Each Child would receive 4 sessions per month, a reduction from on average 6 sessions'</i>	Only 3 children of the 23 supported by the service, have 6 sessions per month. These are children most at risk of family crisis.
<i>'Oaklands service will reduce from 7 days a week to 4'</i>	Oaklands currently offers a 24/7 service, minus bank holidays. The service is proposed to reduce to 3 evenings and 3 mornings a week.
<i>'Oaklands also provides a domiciliary care service'</i>	Domiciliary care, for the children who access Oaklands, is currently not in operation. This misleads the public to believe that families have more support than they do.
<i>'The service could continue to support 11-12 children, a reduction from 21'</i>	The current children's' booking system is constantly tested by children's compatibility and the individual's needs. In order to support up to 12 children over 3 overnight stays per week, the individuals selected to use the service may be those with less complex needs / challenging behaviour. This presents a shift in the Oaklands statement of purpose, not to support families and children in need, but those who are more easily placed.

This miscommunication could be construed as an attempt to appease parents and mislead the public. It fails to mention how children and families will be 'selected' to continue to access the service. This is yet another element of the proposal that has left staff concerned over the transparency regarding the process.

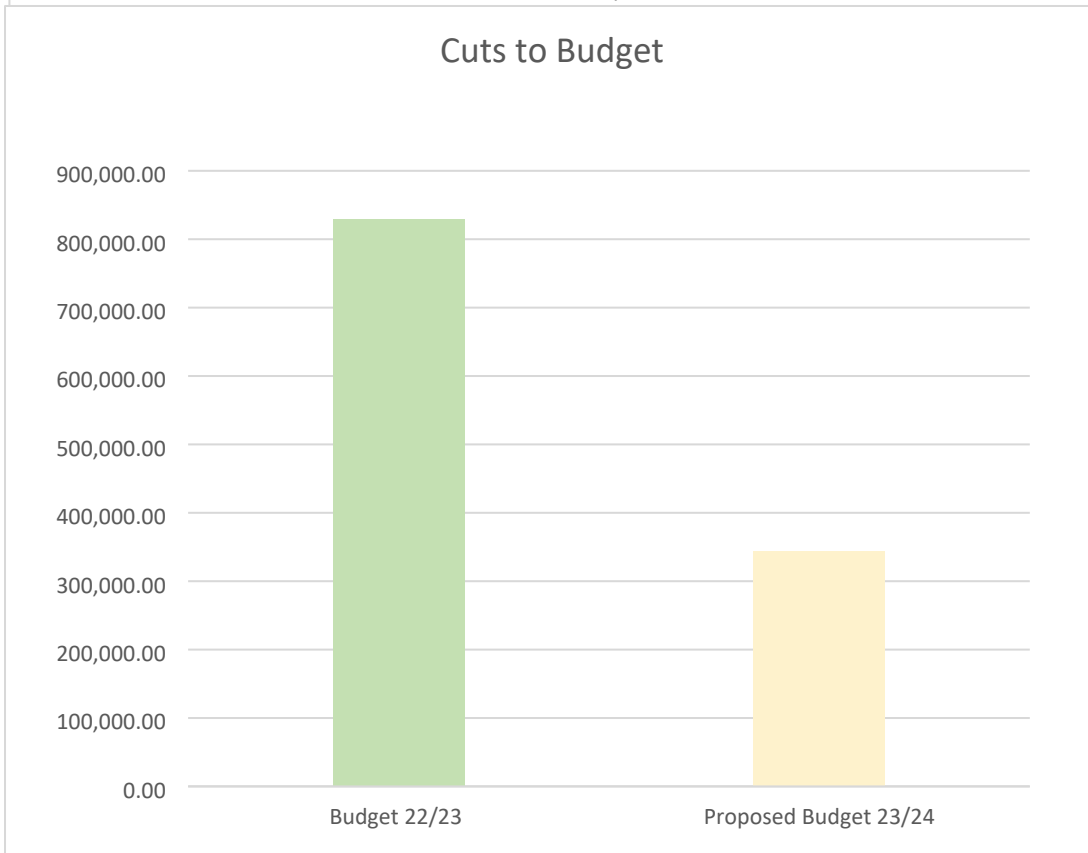
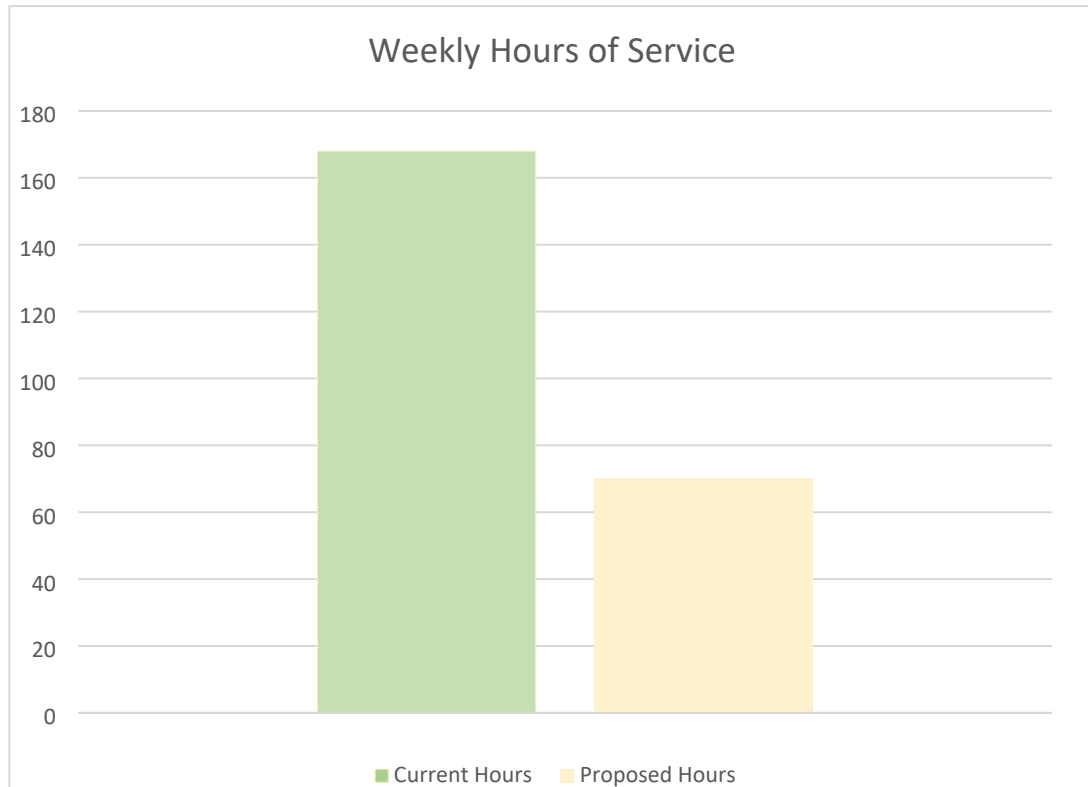
The proposal bears most conviction when it notes: 'the service is not a statutory requirement', Undoubtedly, a Council's decision to support a group of vulnerable people should be based on more than their legal requirements. However, NCC plainly acknowledge that despite professing to be '*courageous, positive, responsible*', they are not led by a moral compass but rather a legal framework of accountability.

**Below is a visual representation of the significance of these proposed cuts; in the pursuit of**

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**transparency a starkly different image begins to emerge.**

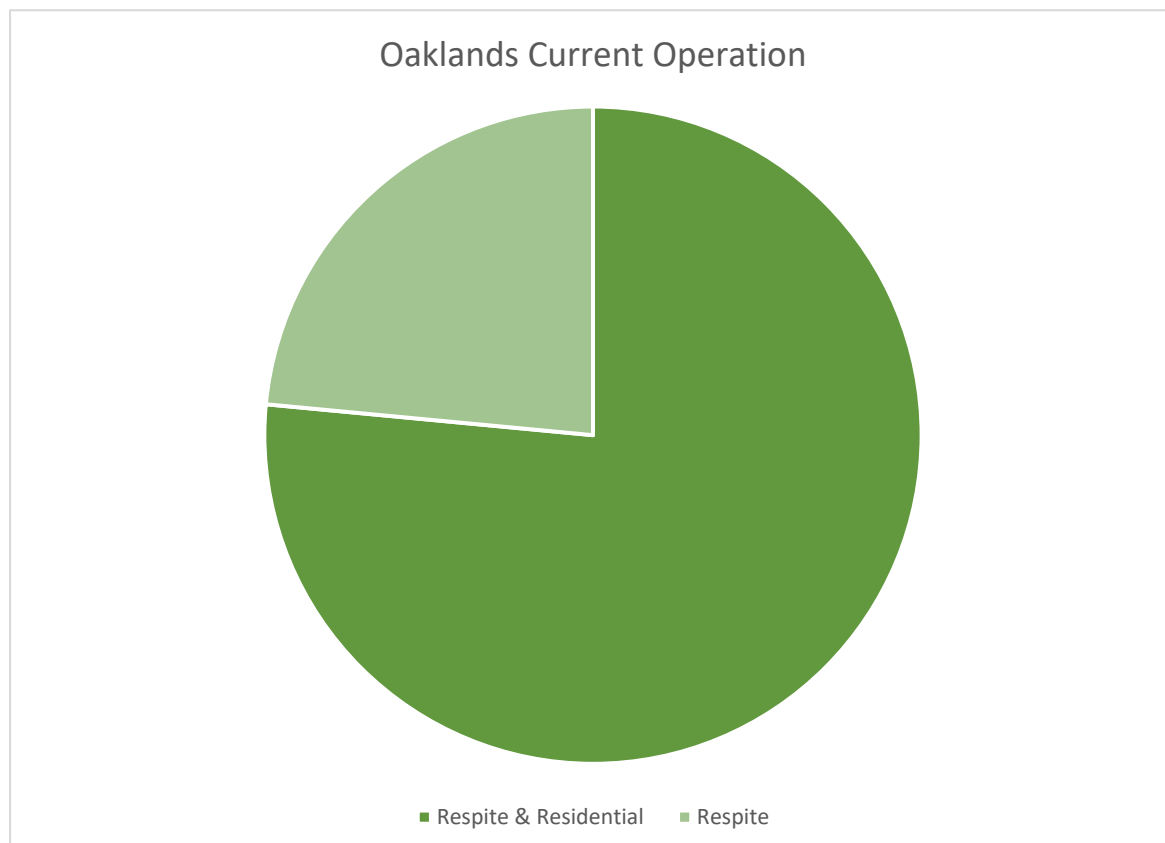
**Oaklands Current Operation**



***Oaklands has a dedicated team of highly skilled and experienced staff, delivering quality specialist care to support disabled children with complex needs. The service has consistently received positive feedback from both the children and families who access it, and the***

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*professionals and external agencies with which they collaborate. In addition to the respite that Oaklands provides, the service has stood in for NCC's absent residential provision for disabled children. This not only mitigates the claim that Oakland's is under threat as it is a 'stand-alone' service, but also highlights the additional value that the service brings. The below image is a representation of the service that Oaklands provides to an already underserved community. The data evidences that over the last 34 months the service has had up to two residents at one time for a total of 26 months.*



*In this time Oaklands has proven that they are able to provide a high-quality respite service alongside an essential residential offering. This work has made significant savings for NCC as detailed in the following case study.*

*In 2020 two children accessed Oaklands with residential status for 75 weeks.*

*The estimated costs mitigated by this placement have been calculated based on:*

*a) figures approximated by NCC representatives.*

*b) figures evidenced in NCC's current expenditure.*

*a) 2 children @ £5,500.00 per child, per week, for 75 weeks = £825,000.00*

*b) 2 children @ £8116.25 per child, per week, for 75 weeks = **£1,217,437.50***

### **NCC**

Newport City Council have sustained a continued attrition regarding disability services including Oaklands over a number of years and consultation periods. NCC have systematically sought to dismantle the service and minimize their responsibilities to disabled children via budget cuts. Their use of public money has been felt in the lives of disabled children, and Oaklands bears witness to both the financial and human costs.

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In response to NCC's proposal to cut the Oaklands respite service, Oaklands staff requested information on financial risk assessment to identify the financial implications of the cuts. In the table below we have identified the estimated savings made by NCC, when using Oaklands as a residential setting, and the potential cost of withdrawing respite support from families for whom it is integral. Again, these totals have been calculated by both information shared by the council, and figures evidenced in NCC's current expenditure.

NCC Weekly Suggested Cost One Child	Actual Weekly Cost One Child
Oaklands Weekly Cost 2 RCCW (Additional hours)	NCC Weekly Saving
£1,025.10	£7,090.95
£104,000.00 - £386,000.00	£422,045.00
Oaklands Annual Cost 2 RCCW (Additional hours)	NCC Annual Saving
£53,315.60	<b>£368,729.40</b>

Not only does this exemplify NCC's current short-sighted-spending and the savings Oaklands generates for the council, but it forecasts the potential costs of taking on residential responsibilities for those children and families who are more at risk of crisis without respite care. These figures, held against the budget allocated to Oaklands as a whole, clearly demonstrate the efficacy of Oaklands as a positive service; one that should be bolstered not bulldozed.

### Dual Registration

Oaklands staff propose that one bed within Oaklands' 5 bedroom property is allocated for the residential placement of a NCC child with disabilities. As previously outlined, a number of children have been made resident at Oaklands on an emergency basis and NCC have subsequently placed these children in costly private homes far from their home environment and community. Oaklands staff believe that we can negate this, improve this system and contribute to enabling disabled children in Newport to live better lives. The cost implication on Oaklands as a respite service, calculated as 2 additional staff for 10 hours each day is detailed in the table below.

By offering one residential placement to a Newport child with disabilities the Council will save £422,045.00 in one year at the potential cost of £53,315.60. This means that the total saving would be £368,729.40, only £116,270.60 short of the proposed savings made by cutting the service. Within this shortfall perhaps NCC might recognise the human cost associated with refusing to offer long-term residential placements for disabled children. Additionally, NCC might consider the additional cost of supporting families at risk of placing their children into a residential setting.

### Human Cost

The present use of Oaklands as a temporary residential setting for disabled children signifies the Council's already short sighted view of the systemic problems it feeds. Children's rights are ignored when they are placed in private residential placements throughout the country. The proposal significantly strains this issue by offering up more children to potential crisis and trauma. This current system fails to recognise children's' rights as set out by the UNNRC:

*Article 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance): governments must support parents by creating support services and giving parents the help they need to care for their children. NCC's*

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proposal directly removes vital support and assistance from families who need help to care for their children.

*Article 23 (children with a disability):* a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life, playing an active role in the community. NCC's proposal places children at higher risk of residential placements outside of their community and disregards this right.

*Article 8 (every child has the right to an identity):* children should be supported to preserve their identity. A widely held view of how identity is constructed relies the environment in which a child grows up. NCC aids a system that ignores this and instead of offering it's own support, gives children over to other local authorities up and down the country.

### Concluding Statements

***Newport City Council have consulted staff and the public in a way that has been misleading and inaccurate. Staff and public have raised concerned over the ethics of this proposal, its formation and dissemination, and its implications.***

***Oaklands respite service, and it's committed staff team, have provided residential placements for children as crisis intervention, and provided a quality respite service as crisis prevention. In cutting the service by over half, this work cannot continue.***

***The savings that Oaklands have made the council in the last 34 months alone have been calculated using figures shared by NCC representatives. The staff disagree with the accuracy of these figures and can evidence that the reality has an even greater financial implication. Oakland's residential offering has saved the council over 1 million pounds.***

***In cutting Oakland's respite service, children and families are at risk of entering the care system. Costly residential placements are estimated using figures shared by NCC representatives, at £104,000-£286,000 per year, per child. We believe this cost is more likely to exceed £422,045.00 per year, per child. We believe that all of the families who are refused access to respite support are at risk of placing their child into residential care as the service would be cut from supporting 23 children, to 11- 12.***

***We have seen first-hand the impact of placing children in residential settings that are not appropriate and fail to recognise children's rights. There is no residential offering for disabled children in Newport, aside from the temporary one that Oaklands offers. Children's rights are rejected by this system propped up by NCC.***

***We propose that Oaklands continue to operate a 24/7 respite service. To support this we would generate income for the service by offering a long-term residential placement to a Newport-child with disabilities. We estimate that this will continue to generate savings in excess of £422,045.00. We acknowledge the cost implications this has on the Oaklands budget as £37,382.80. We identify that despite this, the service can generate savings of up to £384,662.20.***

***For disabled children who access Oaklands as a residential placement,  
NCC could remove the solution and create the crisis.***

***For disabled children who access Oaklands as a respite provision,  
NCC could create the crisis and remove the solution.***